



**U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
BUREAU FOR HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE (BHR)
OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)**

INDIA – Drought

Fact Sheet #1, Fiscal Year (FY) 2001

June 7, 2001

Background

- Drought is a periodic phenomenon in India. Almost 70 percent of the country is considered drought-prone due to weak or irregular monsoon seasons. For the third consecutive year, India is experiencing extreme regional drought conditions. The drought of 1987-88 was known as the drought of the century. The current drought, which began after a 10-year period of sufficient monsoons, may be equally severe. It is part of the regional drought extending through Pakistan, Afghanistan, and across India from Rajasthan and Gujarat, in the west, to Orissa, on the Bay of Bengal.
- Over 90 percent of the population in India is dependant on ground water for household supply. Agriculture accounts for 90 percent of ground water use, while industry accounts for an additional 4 percent. Government of India (GOI) strategies to avert famine through increased, irrigated agricultural production have lowered water tables throughout the country. Access to drinking water has become a problem for many people, especially the at-risk populations in the drought-affected states. The drought in India has created a severe drinking water shortage and a loss of livelihoods for at-risk populations in the drought-affected states.
- In response to the drought during FY 2000, USAID/OFDA provided \$1,027,539 to World Vision, CARE, and Catholic Relief Services for drought relief programs. The NGOs' widely recognized and successful cash-for-work programs addressed the short-term emergency needs of at-risk populations and increased drought resistance through the construction of water harvesting and retention structures.

Numbers Affected

- According to the GOI, inadequate rainfall last year has led to the drought conditions in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, and Rajasthan. Rajasthan and Gujarat, a state still recovering from a massive earthquake on January 26, are the hardest hit.
- The GOI reports that over 125 million people in about 1.1 million villages across 152 districts in eight states are affected. Some unofficial sources place the figure closer to 200 million people.

Current Situation

- Access to drinking water is the most acute problem associated with the drought, affecting the poor and disenfranchised most acutely. The GOI has responded by distributing potable water to the affected populations by tanker trucks and railways. Providing water for the large number of people affected is a daunting task, and some people have not and will not be reached. No increase in disease has been noted, but the lack of water for sanitation and hygiene raises the potential risk.
- GOI supported water-mining and irrigation strategies have accelerated agricultural production and have filled central grain warehouses. However, the current agricultural practices are depleting aquifers at an alarming rate, resulting in decreased ground water storage capacity and increased water pollution (including fluoride, arsenic, and salt-water incursion). Efforts to curb irrigation have reduced the acreage of cultivated land, resulting in fewer agricultural jobs and the loss of livelihoods for vulnerable wage laborers.
- According to GOI reports, Rajasthan (30,583 affected villages; 31 of 32 districts) and Gujarat (12,240 affected villages; 22 of 25 districts) are the most severely affected states. The drought is affecting people in these two states differently. Rajasthan is a more rural state, and is poorer than Gujarat. Seventy percent of its 54 million residents live in rural communities. While 46 % of the land in Rajasthan is under cultivation, 80 % of that farmland is dependant on rainfall. Due to inadequate monsoon seasons, the vast majority of the agricultural community has lost or suffered reductions in two consecutive annual harvests.
- The most at-risk populations are living in remote areas, including small and subsistence farmers who typically have no access to irrigation. The landless and those living on the margins of society, including lower castes and tribal groups, are also vulnerable.
- The GOI has responded to the drought by providing emergency food rations and potable water. The GOI has activated the National Crisis Management Committee to monitor and coordinate drought mitigation activities, including the distribution of drought contingency plans to the affected states. During 2000 and 2001, the GOI's National Calamity Contingency Fund for Drought Mitigation Measures has provided approximately \$61.6 million. In addition, the Indian Railway system is providing free transport of potable water and animal fodder to the drought affected states. The GOI has established a food-for-work program, creating 320 million workdays until June 2001 and supplying 500,000 MT of food grains and 170,000 MT of animal fodder to support these programs.

U.S. Government Assistance

- During April and early May 2001, a BHR/OFDA's Regional Advisor (RA) traveled throughout India to assess the humanitarian needs of the affected populations and determine the most appropriate form of humanitarian assistance. In his assessment report, the RA recommended targeting the most vulnerable communities by implementing cash-for-work programs similar to those that proved successful last year. These programs would generate purchasing power for critical items such as potable water, sanitation, animal fodder, and food commodities.
- On May 15, 2001, U.S. Charge d' Affaires Albert A. Thibault declared a natural disaster in response to the needs of the drought-affected populations in India. On May 16, USAID/OFDA provided \$25,000 in disaster assistance through USAID/New Delhi to the Prime Minister's Disaster Relief Fund. USAID/OFDA is also considering specific NGO proposals for cash-for-work programs in the most vulnerable areas of Rajasthan and Gujarat, based upon the recommendations of the RA's assessment.

Total USAID/OFDA Assistance in FY 2001.....\$25,000

Total USAID/OFDA Assistance in FY 2000.....\$1,027,539

USAID/OFDA fact sheets can be obtained from the USAID web site at http://www.usaid.gov/hum_response/ofda/situation.html

DROUGHT AFFECTED STATES IN INDIA



Affected States



Most Affected States

125 Million People Affected (200 Million Unofficial)

1.1 Million Villages Affected

